

Ennis House  
2607 Glendower Avenue  
Los Angeles  
Los Angeles County  
California

HABS No. CA-1942

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ENNIS HOUSE

HABS No. CA-1942

Location: 2607 Glendower Avenue  
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural interest and merit:

The Ennis House, the largest of Frank Lloyd Wright's California textile block houses, was built in 1924. This majestic structure maintains a commanding position on its hilltop perch and affords a spectacular view of Los Angeles. While only a two bedroom house, it appears very massive due to its great terrace platform. The form and the block patterning are reminiscent of Mayan temple art. The monumentality of the building is suitable for the site but results in a rather undomestic dwelling.

Condition of fabric:

The house is in good structural condition but there is water damage on the interior due to the absorbant quality of the blocks and the window joining, both of which allows water to seep in. The original interior cabinet work and trim are in place and in good shape. The present owners are currently working to check water damage and restore the damaged areas.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Number of Bays: There is no bay spacing, however the house is constructed of 16" modular concrete units.

Number of stories: Two; the upper being the main level of the residence.

Layout, shape: The house has a linear layout and form. There are various projections which complicate the building mass.

Foundations:

Reinforced concrete.

Wall Construction, finish, color:

The entire building is constructed of concrete textile block units, reinforced and mortared together. Some of the units are plain, others are textured. Some of the textured blocks are perforated. The block units are 16" square and 4" thick. They are buff color.

Structural system:

The textile block walls are structural and carry heavy teak beams and secondary beams (also teak) which in turn carry the teak roofing boards. These boards are exposed to the interior of the house.

**Porches, decks, terraces:**

A very large and long terrace extends along the northern side of the house. This terrace contains a swimming pool. A bridge terrace linked to this terrace connects the main house with the servants structure to the west. There was a terrace near the east end of the building on the south side but a former owner enclosed this in an unsympathetic manner. There is a small balcony to the east and one on the south side of the living room. A lower terrace extends along the southern side of the house. The large courtyard to the west of the house separates it from the garage and servant quarters.

**Chimneys:**

The chimneys are masked into the massing of the building, and are finished in the same textile block pattern. They rise in the midst of the building forms, one near the east end of the house, one near center of the north wall and one near the SW corner of the main house.

**Openings: Doors:**

The main entrance door is located at the lower level of the west side. The teak door has a glass panel and is covered with a cast bronze door grille with a motif which recalls Mayan art forms. The main entrance to the complex is through a large automobile gate and a pedestrian gate on the north side; both gates have the same Mayan-like motif. Glass and teak doors open onto the terraces.

**Windows:**

There are fixed glass windows at the corners of the dining room which projects to the south. These corner windows have no corner mullion, just beveled glass. There are 16" wide casements in various positions. The large glass panels of the living and dining rooms have leaded glass panels of delicate linear and angular patterns. Some of the small pieces of glass are colored. All the windows have teak frames set in teak frameworks.

**Roof:** The composite roof is composed of various levels which creates an active silhouette. There is a slight parapet around the roofs.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR**

**Plans:**

The entry level is situated at the west end and is reached through the courtyard. The entrance hall has the utility hall off it to the right (S), a basement ahead to the right (SE corner of hall); this room was later fashioned into a billiard room. A powder room is located to the left (N). The stairs to the upper level are located in the NE corner of the entrance hall.

The second level is the main floor of the house. One arrives at this level near the NW corner of the plan at the end of a long gallery, one side of which opens to the rooms of the house and the other opens to the vast north terrace. This hall extends to the east. Beginning in the NW corner, moving counter-clockwise, is the kitchen, pantry, guest room

with its bath, the very large dining room, the living room, the library with its bath, a terrace (later enclosed), and the master bedroom with its bath. There is a powder room at the top of the stairs to this level. At the western end of the building complex are the servants quarters on the same level as the main floor of the house. The lower level contains the garage and chauffeur's quarters.

#### Stairways:

The main stairway is L-shaped with 6" risers. There are 8 risers to a landing, with the remaining 2 risers to the left. There are 6 risers of the same height leading from the hall to the kitchen level and 6 leading from the living room to the dining room. All these stairs have marble risers and treads.

Floors: The floors are marble in the areas of circulation, with teak floors used in the main rooms. The bathrooms, kitchen and pantry have tile floors. Those in the master bath are vermilion, black, and gold; those in the kitchen and pantry are black and white.

#### Walls:

The walls are exposed textile block units, except for the tile walls in the bathrooms, kitchen, and pantry. The tile walls do not cover the entire walls, the remainder of which are done in plaster.

#### Ceiling:

The main rooms of the house have teak plank ceilings carried on teak beams. The ceiling in the master bedroom has a cathedral section. The kitchen, baths, pantry have plaster ceilings.

#### Doorways and doors:

Solid teak doors with teak frames are employed. Some of the doors have layered board patterns on them. The doors vary in height from the standard height to 13' high.

Decorative features: The textured blocks themselves account for the majority of the decorative quality. The textured units accent the lines of the building and emphasize the masses and surfaces. A teak cornice marks the transition from the texture blocks to the clean linear quality of the ceilings. There is a small dentile cornice in the upper hall. Decorative grilles are located at the top of the main stairway and over the main entrance door. These have Mayan-like motifs. These are details designed by the architect, from those mentioned to the door handles and the carpet pattern. All aspects of the building reinforce the intricate detailing undertaken by the architect. The fireplace in the hall opposite the living room has a mosaic over the opening. The subject is a tree on a gold background. The dining room fireplace has a bronze plate over the opening. The image is labeled "XIUHITECUTU= The God of Fire". There are built-in shelves and closets in the library. They are of teak. There are hardwood cabinets built into the kitchen.

Hardware:

Cast brass door rings which pick up details of the decorative patterns are used on the doors. The brass butt hinges have a small connector point.

Heating:

Fireplaces provided the heat in the early building. Three forced air furnaces were later added.

Lighting:

The original hanging brass fixtures are still in place. There are various elegant designs but they do not appear to be the designs of the architect.

Plumbing:

The master bathroom has a sunken tub and a black marble washstand. Other than these, the remainder of the fixtures are standard.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The house is situated atop a hill extending from east to west. The road (Glendower) bends around the house on the east and the main entrance is on the north. The terrace walls carry down to where they meet the slope of the site, therefore adding to the bulk of the building. The building appears from the distance as a tremendously large monument rather than a two bedroom dwelling. The building is crowded on the site.

Landscaping:

The site was originally covered with tall pines, but at present is rather denuded except for vines acting as groundcover.

Outbuilding:

The garage and servants' quarters are located to the west of the main house but are attached to it via a bridge terrace over the driveway entrance. The one large unified building complex is presented.

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